Unit .24

Session .01

Jesus Casts Out a Demon

Scripture

Luke 8:26-39

26 Then they sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. **27** When he got out on land, a demon-possessed man from the town met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes and did not stay in a house but in the tombs. **28** When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before him, and said in a loud voice, "What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torment me!" **29** For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was guarded, bound by chains and shackles, he would snap the restraints and be driven by the demon into deserted places. **30** "What is your name?" Jesus asked him. "Legion," he said, because many demons had entered him. **31** And they begged him not to banish them to the abyss. **32** A large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. The demons begged him to permit them to enter the pigs, and he gave them permission. **33** The demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. **34** When the men who tended them saw what had happened, they ran off and reported it in the town and in the countryside. **35** Then people went out to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man the demons had departed from, sitting at Jesus's feet, dressed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. **36** Meanwhile, the eyewitnesses reported to them how the demon-possessed man was delivered. **37** Then all the people of the Gerasene region asked him to leave them, because they were gripped by great fear. So getting into the boat, he returned. **38** The man from whom the demons had departed begged him earnestly to be with him. But he sent him away and said, **39** "Go back to your home, and tell all that God has done for you." And off he went, proclaiming throughout the town how much Jesus had done for him.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus has power and authority over evil spirits.

Option 1

Split your students into at least four different groups. They will be either making drawings or skits, depending on your preferences or the preferences of the groups.

At least one group should do a drawing or skit depicting each of the following themes:

- Bad authority: using authority in hurtful or harmful way
- Good authority: using authority in helpful or loving way
- Bad authority: responding to proper authority in an improper way
- Good authority: responding to proper authority in a proper way

Settings could be anything: the workplace, a classroom, a sports team, a family. Have students prepare their drawings or skits.

Debrief by talking about what patterns you see. What commonalities did they draw? What insights can they offer about how authority should be wielded and how it should be responded to?

In today's lesson, Jesus will demonstrate His authority. Ironically, demons will respond more appropriately than human beings will; let see what we can learn so we can properly respond to Jesus' great authority.

Option 2

One Native American proverb goes, "A man's greatness is determined by the might of his enemies." Your students are going to use the principle behind this maxim to show someone or something's greatness.

Ask your students to get into pairs or groups of three. Each group should come up with one or two examples where someone or something overcame or defeated a great enemy; they should then also explain how that victory shows the greatness of the person or thing. These examples could come from history, from fiction, from movies, from sports, or anything else they can think of. It could be a military victory, or a sports championship, or someone curing a ravaging disease. If you'd like, and they have time, they can draw their examples.

After a time, let them share what they came up with. Which of their examples best demonstrates the awesomeness or excellence of the victors? How does what one overcomes show one's greatness?

In today's lesson, we'll see that Jesus has authority over demons. If even hostile demons recognize Jesus' authority, how magnificent is He?

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 8:26-33.

Demonic possession in the Bible strikes most of us as weird and confusing. Most of us don't have a category for it outside of fictitious depictions in horror films. But the Bible is true, so demonic possession and oppression are real and possible in our world.

- **What do you think causes us to be afraid of things we don't understand? Why do you think we fear evil despite God's command not to?**

Based on this wild man's experience, demonic possession torments, wounds, endangers, and isolates its victims. To see this man in action would cause fear and revulsion in us; to witness him running toward us and screaming would send us running away in terror. But as much as we would have been afraid of the demon-possessed man, the man-possessing demon was even more afraid of Jesus.

Why was the demon—or demons, as it turned out—afraid of Jesus and groveling at His feet? Because the "Legion" of demons inhabiting the man recognized Jesus' identity and authority. Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, and He Himself will cast all demons, including Satan, into hell for all eternity, once the time has come.

So get the picture here: One Jesus versus a legion of demons with super strength, having snapped shackles and chains—but the demons are the ones begging for their lives. Jesus commanded them to come out of the man, and they had to obey the Son of the Most High God. They asked Jesus' permission to enter a herd of pigs, which again reveals Jesus' authority because the demons needed His permission, which He granted. The large herd went crazy, ran into the sea, and drowned. Such is the destructive and deadly intent of demons. Imagine the suffering and torment inside the man, who was now free.

- **What does a faith response to the authority of Jesus look like, as opposed to the forced submission displayed by the demons?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 80, DDG)

Demons

Demons are angelic beings who sinned against God and now continually work evil in the world today (Job 1:6; Zech. 3:1; Luke 10:18). Demons oppose God and seek to destroy His work, as seen in the Bible's description of Satan, the head of demons, who seeks to "steal, kill, and destroy." Though demons have power, they are limited by God's control and can only act within the constraints of what God permits. In the end, all of the demons will be cast into the lake of fire, for which it was originally created.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus has power and authority over evil spirits.

Luke 8

26-27. Can you imagine running into this guy? Scary! He was a man alive among the dead. Although people tried to bind him with chains, he broke out of them. He was what many today would label a "crazy person," which is one of the reasons he was isolated from society.

People were fearful of this man for obvious reasons. First, they were afraid because he had incredible strength. They tried everything they could to restrain him from harming others. They put chains around his hands and feet, but nothing they tried could overcome him. The shackles were no match for his strength.

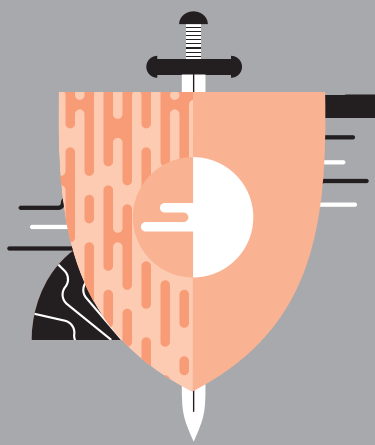
Second, they were afraid because of his behavior. He was an outcast. He didn't fit in. And, since they couldn't control him, they banished him. He was completely ostracized from culture and society.

Unlike those who bound the man and cast him out to live among the dead, Jesus met this man on the shore and engaged him. Jesus didn't turn His back on this needy sinner. In fact, it was for people like this that Jesus came in the first place. Jesus cared about this demoniac because he saw a sick man, not just the demonic spirit that ravaged him. No amount of medicine could help this man. No self-help book could revive him. Jesus knew what we know now—that He alone had the power and authority to change this man's life forever.

28-30. "Legion" was afraid because Jesus has the power and authority to punish His enemies, both physical and spiritual. One day He will exercise that authority, but not yet, not until the Father says the time is right (Mark 13:32). For now, the demons would simply be displaced at the word of the Lord.

Jesus' Identity: The demons knew that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, the Second Person of the Trinity. As James 2:19 says, even the demons believe in God, and they shudder. They believe in God and His Son, but they refuse to honor and obey Him; therefore, they know they are awaiting His eternal wrath.

Jesus' Authority: The demons begged not to be tormented by Jesus, implying Jesus has the power to do so, and He does. They feared banishment to the abyss, which is hell, the place of eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), and which also will be the eternal punishment for all those who do not believe and follow Jesus.



In Defense (p. 82, DDG)

The demons identifying themselves as "Legion" indicated the strength of the demons. A Roman military legion consisted of about 2,000 soldiers. The name Legion thus serves to indicate a large number (because we are many), explains the supernatural strength of the man, and magnifies the fact that Jesus was the more powerful One (Mark 1:7; 3:27). Furthermore, pigs were unclean to Jews, and herding them was forbidden (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8). The large herd reminds us that this event took place in a Gentile area (Mark 5:11). The unclean spirits begged Jesus not to send them out of the region (Mark 5:10), and then, they begged to be sent into unclean animals (Mark 5:12).

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 8:34-37.

The demons left the man, entered the pigs, and destroyed the whole herd, around two thousand pigs, according to Mark's Gospel (Mark 5:13). Later, everyone in the region came out to see what had happened, and what they saw blew their minds and scared them to their core. They saw pig corpses bobbing in the sea of Galilee, but that's not what scared them. They heard about the herd going crazy and rushing into the sea, but that's not what scared them. They saw a formerly wild and naked man sitting still and in clothes—this was the display of the power and authority of Jesus, which was too much for them to comprehend.

The people in this Gentile region had tried to restrain the man yet failed every time. Chains and shackles were insufficient to restrain this man who was out of his mind. No doubt they had written him off and hoped he remained secluded in the graveyard. They could do nothing for him.

Jesus, however, succeeded with mere words in freeing the man from his spiritual shackles. No longer wild, the man was sitting still beside Jesus. No longer naked, the man was dressed. No longer out of his mind, the man was in his right mind. His sanity had been returned to him through the intervention of the supernatural Savior of humanity.

- **How might the authority and power of Jesus cause fear in people today?**
- **What are some radical changes you've seen in the lives of people who trust in Jesus?**

Read Luke 8:38-39.

As Jesus got back in the boat with His disciples to leave, He had a brief conversation with the man whom He had freed. Naturally, the man wanted to go with Jesus. He wanted to be with his Savior and learn from Him. He begged Jesus for this. This begs the question for us: How eager are we to be in the presence of our Savior? Do we seek Him out through the Scriptures and prayer? Do we join regularly with His body, the church? Or do we only seek Him when we think we need Him? Or worse, are we content merely to claim salvation and then move on with our lives independent of Jesus?

- **What is your level of desire to walk daily with the Savior, Jesus Christ?**

no desire — eager desire

Our level of desire to commune with Jesus is a reflection of the sin in our lives, but it is directly proportional to our desire to repent of our sin. When we recognize the depths of our depravity and the amazing grace of our freedom through faith in Jesus, sin begins to lose its appeal and we find greater satisfaction in the Son of the Most High God. This is the process of sanctification borne out in the new identity of the believer.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus has power and authority over evil spirits.

Luke 8

34-37. In response to the people's fear, Jesus conceded to their request for Him to leave. He chose not to force the issue. While Jesus is the Son of the Most High God and worthy of all glory, honor, and praise, He is also patient for people to come to Him in their right mind with a heart of faith. He does not take disciples by force but softly and tenderly calls them to His side. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus works in the hearts of people so they no longer see Him through eyes of fear but through eyes of faith. This work is accomplished often through the witness of Jesus' followers, whom He has commissioned to share His good news of salvation.

Activity

As a large group, make a list of some of the Bible's commands: for example, honoring our parents, loving our enemies, being patient with one another, etc.

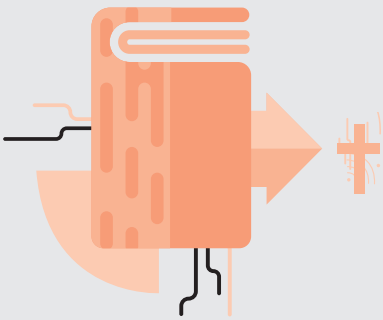
Once you've made your list, have students break into small groups to make skits. Assign each skit one of the commands.

Each group will now make three short skits. In each skit, they will show someone responding to the Bible's command; each skit will also correspond to how someone responded to Jesus' authority in today's lesson. In the first skit, the protagonist(s) should recognize the command's authority, but not respond to it (for example, someone might say that being patient with one another is a good idea, but still display impatience). In the second skit, the protagonist(s) should fear the command (for example, they might be afraid of what might happen to them if they were too patient, like being taken advantage of). In the third skit, the protagonist(s) should obey the command (for example, they might be patient toward someone who is rude to them). Students should make skits as applicable to their lives as possible.

Let students prepare and then show their skits. Point out how the first two scenes are not proper responses; they are like the demons' and people's responses in Luke 8. Merely acknowledging Jesus' authority is insufficient, and we should never fear the authority of the One who loved us and offered Himself up for us (Rom. 8:32). Even the third response could be "wrong" if it isn't obedience to Jesus' authority that is rooted in faith. Consider other ways we could obey Jesus' authority instead of simply recognizing or fearing it.

(p. 81, DDG) Christ Connection

When Jesus approached the man who was possessed by demons, even the demons recognized His authority. Jesus drove the demons out of the man, but when the people saw His authority, they were afraid and drove Him off. Jesus would later demonstrate His authority over sin and evil in a greater way through His crucifixion and resurrection. While many continue to reject Him, one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11).



JESUS CASTS OUT A DEMON

Luke 8:26–39

JESUS CASTS OUT A DEMON

Jesus has power and authority over evil spirits.

JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

HEAD

Describe the man from Gerasenes before and after Jesus healed him.

How did the people of Gerasenes respond when Jesus cast the demons into the herd of pigs? Why did they beg Jesus to leave their region?

HEART

The demon-possessed man had no hope. Jesus showed His great power over sin and Satan by healing him, and this man's life was forever changed. How does knowing that Jesus has power over sin and Satan help you to believe that God will do what is best in every situation?

The people from Gerasenes placed their hope in their possessions. Even though they witnessed a miracle, they couldn't see that Jesus offered an incomparably greater hope. Have you ever put your hope in someone or something and been disappointed? (What people and things have you placed your hope in and been disappointed?) Why are we often tempted to put our hope in these people and things instead of in God?

HANDS

The world is full of messages that say there is no reason for hope. But even in areas that are hard to face (i.e., sin, sickness, death and climate or cultural concerns), our hope will grow when we are anchored in the truth that Jesus has power over all things. Think of 1–2 areas that concern you most right now. For each area, write out (or record on your device) the following statement: "Jesus has power over [fill in your area of concern], so I have hope that God is at work right now, doing what is best."

Think of someone you know who, like the man in the story, is facing a difficult problem that they can't solve or handle on their own. Think of a way you can share with them the hope we have because Jesus can handle even our worst problems and try to do that this week.